

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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BY THE AUTHOR OF "VIXEN," "LADY AUDLEY'S SECRET," ETC.

CHAPTER XVI. "NO MAN MAY ALWAYS HAVE PROSPERITEE."

EDGAR TURCHILL did not go to the other end of the world to hide his grief and mortification at this second overthrow of his fondest hopes. He absented himself from South Hill for nearly a month, yet so contrived that his absence should not appear the result of pride or anger. Mrs. Turchill's annual sea-side holiday was as much an institution as the opening of Parliament, or the Derby: and she expected on all such occasions to be escorted and accompanied by her only son. She liked a fashionable watering-place, where there was a well-dressed crowd to be seen on parade or pier; she required to have her leisure enlivened by a good brass band; and she would accept nothing less in the way of lodgings, than an airy bay-windowed drawing-room in the very best part of the sea front.

"If I am not to come to the sea-side comfortably I would rather stay at home," she said to her confidante Rebecca; an axiom which Rebecca received as respectfully as if it had been holy writ.

"Of course, mum. Why should you come away from Hawksyard to be cramped or moped?" said Rebecca. "You've all you can wish there."

Such murmurings as these had arisen when Edgar, sick to death of Brighton and Eastbourne, Scarborough and Torquay, had tempted his mother to visit some more romantic and less civilised shore; where the accommodation was of the rough and ready order, and where there was neither

parade nor pier for the exhibition of fine clothes to the music of brazen bands. For picturesque scenery Mrs. Turchill cared not a jot. All wild and rugged coasts she denounced sweepingly, as dangerous to life and limb, and therefore to be avoided. The wildest bit of scenery she could tolerate was Beachy Head; and even that grassy height she deemed objectionable. Nor did she appreciate any watering-place which could not boast a smart array of shop-windows. She liked to be tempted by trumpery modern Dresden; or to have her love of colour gratified by the latest invention in bonnets and parasols. She liked a circulating library of the old-fashioned, Miss Burney type: where she could dawdle away an hour looking at new books and papers, soothed by the sympathetic strains of a musical-box. She liked to have her son, well-dressed and in a top-hat, in attendance upon her during her afternoon drive in the local fly, along a smooth chalky high-road leading to nowhere in particular. She liked to attend local concerts, or to hear Miss Snevillici, the renowned Shakespearian elocutionist, read the Trial Scene in the Merchant of Venice, followed by Tennyson's Queen of the May.

To poor Edgar this sea-side holiday seemed always a foretaste of purgatory. It was ever so much worse than the fortnight's hard labour in London; for in the big city there were sights worth seeing; while here, at the stereotyped watering-place, life was one dismal round of genteel inactivity.

But this year Edgar was seized with a sudden desire to hasten the annual expedition.

"Mother, I think this lovely weather must break up before long," he said briskly, with a laborious affectation of cheerfulness,

as he sat at dinner with his parent on the day after Daphne's cruelty. "What should you say to our starting for the sea-side to-morrow?"

"To-morrow. My dear Edgar, that would be quite impossible. I shall want a week for packing."

"A week! Surely Rebecca could put your things into a portmanteau in six hours as easily as in six days."

"You don't know what you are talking about, my dear. A lady's wardrobe is so different from a man's. All my gowns will want looking over carefully before they are packed. And I must have Miss Piper over from Warwick to do some alterations for me. The fashions change so quickly nowadays. And some of my laces will have to be washed. And I am not sure that I shall not have to drive over to Leamington and order a bonnet. I should not like to disgrace you by appearing on the parade with a dowdy bonnet."

Edgar sighed. He would have liked to go to some wild Welsh or Scottish coast, far from beaten tracks. He would have liked some sea-side village in the south of Ireland—Dunmore, or Tramore, or Kilkee—some quiet retreat nestled in a hollow of the cliffs, where as yet never brass band nor fashionable gowns had come; a place to which people came for pure love of fine air and grand scenery, and not to show off their clothes or advertise their easy circumstances. But he knew that if he took his mother to such a place she would be miserable; so he held his peace.

"Where would you like to go this year?" he said presently.

"Well, I have been considering that point, Edgar. Let me see now. We went to Brighton last year——"

"Yes," sighed Edgar, remembering what a tread-mill business the lawn had seemed to him; how ineffably tiresome the Aquarium; how monotonous the shops in the King's Road, and the entertainments at the Pavilion.

"And to Scarborough the year before."

"Yes," with a still wearier sigh.

"And the year before that to Eastbourne, and the year before that to Torquay. Don't you think we might go to Torquay again this year. I hear it is very much improved."

"Very much built upon, I suppose you mean, mother. More smoky chimneys, more hotels, more churches, longer streets. I should think, judging by what it had come to when we saw it, that by this time

Torquay must be a very good imitation of Bayswater. However, if you like Torquay——"

"It is one of the few places I do like."

"Then let it be Torquay, by all means. I'll tell you what I'll do, mother. I'll run down to Torquay to-morrow, find some nice lodgings for you—I think by this time I know exactly what you want in that way—and engage them for any day you like to name."

"That's very kind of you, Edgar. But be sure you get some reference as to the landlady's character, so that you may be certain there has been no fever case in the house during the last twelvemonth. And it would be as well to get a local architect to look at the drains. It would be a guinea well spent."

"All right, mother. I'll do anything you like. I am longing for a blow of sea-air."

"But it will be at least a week before I can come. What will you do with yourself in the meantime?"

"Oh, I shall contrive to amuse myself somehow. I might go on to Dartmouth; and charter a boat, and go up the Dart. I want very much to see the Dart. Only say on what day I may expect you at Torquay."

"Am I to travel alone, Edgar?"

"You'll have Rebecca. And the journey won't be difficult. You'll join the express at Swindon, don't you know——"

"If you think I can trust to Rebecca's care of the luggage," said Mrs. Turchill dubiously. "She's very steady."

"Steady! Well, she ought to be at her age. You've only to get the luggage labelled, you see, mother——"

"I never trust to that," answered the matron solemnly. "I like Rebecca to get out at every station where the train stops, and see with her own eyes that my luggage is in the van. Railway people are so stupid."

Edgar did not envy Rebecca. Having thus adroitly planned an immediate departure he was off soon after daybreak next morning, and arrived at Torquay in time for dinner. He perambulated the loneliest places he could find all the evening, brooding over his disappointment, and wondering if there were any foundation for Gerald Goring's idea that Daphne was to be won by him even yet. He slept at the Imperial, and devoted the next morning to lodging-hunting; till his soul sickened at the very sight of the inevitable housemaid,

who can't answer the most general enquiry—not so far as to say how many bedrooms there are in the house, without reference to the higher powers—and the inevitable landlady, who cannot make up her mind about the rent till she has asked how many there are in family, and whether late dinners will be required. Before sundown, however, after ascending innumerable flights of stairs, and looking into a dismal series of newly-furnished rooms, he found a suite of apartments which he believed would satisfy his mother and Rebecca; and having engaged the same for a period of three weeks, he went down to the water's edge, to a spot where boating-men most did congregate, and there negotiated the hire of a rakish little yawl, just big enough to be safe in a summer sea. In this light craft he was to sail at six o'clock next morning with a man and a boy.

"How Daphne would enjoy knocking about this lovely coast in just such a boat," he thought. "If she were my wife, I would buy her as pretty a yacht as any lady could desire, and she and I would sail half round the world together. She must be tired of the Avon, poor child."

Daphne was very tired of the Avon. Never had the days of her life seemed longer or drearier than they seemed to her just now, when her faithful slave Edgar was no longer at hand to minister to her caprices. A strange stillness seemed to have fallen upon South Hill. Sir Vernon was laid up with those gouty symptoms which Daphne fancied were only another name for ill-temper, so closely did the two complaints seem allied. At such times Madoline was more than ever necessary to his well-being. She sat with him in the library; she read to him; she wrote his letters; and was in all things verily his right hand. The most pure and perfect filial love sweetened an office, which would have seemed hard to an ungrateful or cold-hearted daughter. Yet in the close retirement of the stern-looking business-like chamber, with its prim book-shelves and standard literature—not a book which every decently-read student does not know from cover to cover—she could but remember the bright summer days that were gone; the aimless wanderings in meadow and wood; the drives to Goring Abbey; the tea-drinkings in the cloisters or in the gardens; the happy season which was gone. The knowledge that this one happy summer, the first she and Gerald had ever spent

together as engaged lovers, was ended and over, made her feel as if some part of her own youth had gone with it—something which could never come again. It had been such an utterly happy period; such peerless weather; such a fair gladsome earth, teeming with all good things—even the farmers ceasing to grumble, and owning that, for once in a way, there was hope of a prosperous harvest. And now it was over; the corn was reaped, and sportsmen were tramping over the stubble; the plough-horses were creeping slowly across the hill; the sun was beginning to decline soon after five o'clock tea; breathings of approaching winter sharpened the sweet morning breezes; autumnal mists veiled the meadows at eventide.

Gerald Goring had gone to Scotland to shoot grouse. It seemed to Daphne, prowling about gardens and meadows with Goldie, in a purposeless manner that was the essence of idleness, as if the summer had gone in a breath. Yesterday she was here, that glorious, radiant, disembodied goddess we call Summer—yesterday she was here, and all the lanes were sweetened with lime-blossoms, and the roses were being wasted with prodigal profusion; and the river ran liquid gold; and to sit on a sunny bank was to be steeped in warm delight. To-day there were only stiff-looking dahlias, and variegated foliage, and mouse-coloured plants, and house-leek borders in the gardens where the roses had been; and to sit on a grassy bank was to shiver, or to sneeze. The river had a dismal look. There had been heavy rains within the last few days, and the willowy banks were hidden under dull mud-coloured water. There was no more pleasure in boating.

"You may oil her, or varnish her, or do anything that is proper to be done with her, before you put her away for the winter, Bink," Daphne said to her faithful attendant; "I sha'n't row any more this year."

"Lor, miss, we may have plenty more fine days yet."

"I don't care for that. I am tired of rowing. Perhaps I may never row again."

She went into luncheon yawning, and looking much more tired than Madoline, who had been writing letters for her father all the morning.

"I wish I were a hunting young woman, Lina," she said.

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"I wish I were a hunting young woman, Lina," she said.

"Why, dear?"

"Because I should have something to look forward to in the winter."

"If you could only employ yourself more indoors, Daphne."

"Do I not employ myself indoors? Why I play billiards for hours at a stretch, when I have any one to play with. I practised out-of-the-way strokes for an hour and a half this morning."

"I am sure, dear, you would be happier if you had some more feminine amusements; if you were to go on with your water-colour painting, for instance. Gerald could give you a little help when he is here. He paints beautifully. I'm sure he would be pleased to help you."

"No, dear; I have no talent. I like beginning a sketch; but directly it begins to look horrid I lose patience; and then I begin to lay on colour in a desperate way, till the whole thing is the most execrable daub imaginable; and then I get into a rage, and tear it into a thousand bits. It's just the same with my needle-work; there always comes a time when I get my thread entangled, and begin to pucker, and the whole business goes wrong. I have no patience. I shall never finish anything. I shall never achieve anything. I am an absolute failure."

"Daphne, if you only knew how it pains me to hear you talk of yourself like that——"

"Then I won't do it again. I would not pain you for the wealth of this world—not even to have it always summer, instead of a dull, abominable shivery season like this."

"Gerald says it is lovely in Argyleshire; balmy and warm; almost too hot for walking over the hills."

"He is enjoying himself, I suppose," said Daphne coldly.

"Yes; he is having capital sport."

"Shooting those birds that make our dining-room smell so nasty every evening, and helping to stock Aunt Rhoda's larder."

"He does not intend to stay after the end of this month. He will be home early in October."

Daphne did not even affect to be interested. She was feeding Goldie, who was allowed to come into luncheon when Sir Vernon was not in the way.

"I had a letter from Mrs. Turchill this morning," said Lina; "she is enjoying herself immensely at Torquay. Edgar is very attentive and devoted to her, going everywhere with her. He is a most affectionate son."

"And a good son makes a good husband, doesn't he, Lina? Is that idea at the

bottom of your mind, when you talk of his commonplace goodness to his commonplace mother."

"I don't want to talk of him, Daphne, to anyone who values him so little as you do."

"But I value him very much—almost as much as I do Goldie—but not quite, not quite, my pet," she added reassuringly to the dog, lest he should be jealous. "I have missed him horribly; no one to tease, no one to talk nonsense with. You are so sensible that I could not afford to shock you by my absurdities; and Mr. Goring is so cynical that I fancy he is always laughing at me. I miss Edgar every hour of the day."

"And yet——"

"And yet I don't care one little straw for him—in the kind of way you care for Mr. Goring," said Daphne with a sudden blush.

Lina sighed and was silent. She had not abandoned all hope that Daphne would in time grow more warmly attached to the faithful swain, whose society she evidently missed sorely in these dull autumnal days, during which the only possible excitement was a box of new books from Mudie's.

"More voyages to the North Pole; more three weeks on the top of the biggest pyramid; more memoirs of Philip of Macedon's private secretary," cried Daphne, sitting on the ground beside the newly-arrived box, and tossing all the instructive books on to the carpet, after a contemptuous glance at the title. "Here is Browning's new poem, thank goodness! and a novel, *My Only Jo*. Told in the first person and present tense, no doubt; nice and light and lively. I think I'll take that and Browning, if you don't mind, Lina; and you shall have all the travels and memoirs."

With the help of novels and poetry, and long rambles even in the wild showery weather, waterproofed and booted against the storm, and wearing a neat little felt wide-awake which weather could not spoil, Daphne contrived to get through her life somehow while her faithful slave was away. Was it indeed he whom she missed so sorely? Was it his footfall which her ear knew so well; his step which quickened the beating of her heart, and brought the warm blood to her cheek? Was it his coming and going which so deeply stirred the current of her being? Life had been empty of delight for the last three weeks; but was it Edgar's absence which made the little world of South Hill so blank and

dreary? In her heart of hearts Daphne knew too well that it was not. Yet Edgar had made an important element in her life. He had helped her, if not to forget, at least to banish thought. He had sympathised with all her frivolous pleasures, and helped her to take life lightly.

"If I were once to be serious I should break my heart," she said to herself, her thoughts straying off from *My Only Jo*, which was the most frothy of fashionable novels.

Mrs. Turchill was so delighted with Torquay, in its increased towniness and shoppiness, its interesting ritualistic services, at which it was agreeable to assist once in a way, however much a well-regulated mind might disapprove all Papistical innovations, that October had begun before she and her son returned to Hawksyard. Edgar had been glad to stay away. He shrank with a strange shyness from meeting Daphne; albeit he was always longing for her as the hart for water-brooks. He amused himself knocking about in his little yawl-rigged yacht, thinking of the girl he loved. Mrs. Turchill complained that he had grown selfish and inattentive. He rarely walked with her on the parade; he refused to listen to the town band; he went reluctantly to hear Miss Snevillici; and slumbered in his too-conspicuous front seat while that lady declaimed the *Balcony Scene* from *Romeo and Juliet*.

"If it were not for Rebecca I should feel horribly lonely," complained Mrs. Turchill. "And it is not right that I should be dependent upon a servant for society."

Gerald had not yet returned. He had gone on a yachting expedition to the Orkneys with an old college chum. He was enjoying the wild free life, and his letters to Madoline were full of fun and high spirits.

"Next year we shall be here together, perhaps," he wrote. "I think you would like the fun. It would be so new to you after the placid pleasures of South Hill. And what a yacht we would have. This I am now upon is a mere cockle-shell to the ship I would build for my dear love. There should be room enough for you and all your pets—Fluff and the squirrel, your books, your piano; and for Daphne, too, if she would like to come; only she is such a wild young person that I should live in constant fear of her falling overboard."

Madoline read this passage to Daphne laughingly. "You see that he remembers you, dear. The thought of you enters into his plans for the future."

"He is very kind. I am much obliged to him," Daphne answered icily.

It was not the first time she had responded coldly to Madoline's mention of her lover. Her sister felt the slight against her idol, and was deeply wounded.

"Daphne," she said, in a voice that was faintly tremulous in spite of her effort to be calm, "you have said many little things lately—or perhaps it is hardly what you have said, but only your looks and tones—which make me think that you dislike Gerald."

"Dislike him! No, that is impossible. He has all the attributes which make people admired and liked."

"Yet I don't think you like him."

"It is not in my nature to like many people. I like Edgar. I love you, with all my heart and soul. Be content with that, darling," said Daphne, kneeling by Madoline's side, resting her bright head, with its soft silken hair, on her sister's shoulder—the face looking downward and half hidden.

"No; I cannot be content. I made up my mind that Gerald was to be as dear to you as a brother—as dear as the brother you lost might have been, had God spared him and made him all we could wish. And now you set up some barrier of false pride against him."

"I don't know about false pride. I can hardly be very fond of a man who ridicules me, and treats me like a child, or a play-thing. Affection will scarcely thrive in an atmosphere of contempt."

"Contempt! Why, Daphne, what can have put such an idea into your head. Gerald likes and admires you. If you knew how he praises your beauty, your fascinating ways. You would not have him praise you to your face, would you? My pet, I should be sorry to see you spoiled by adulation."

"Do you suppose I want praise or flattery?" cried Daphne angrily. "I want to be respected. I want to be treated like a woman, not a child. I— Forgive me, Lina dearest. I daresay I am disagreeable and ill-tempered."

"Only believe the truth, dear. Gerald has no thought of you that is not tender and flattering. If he teases you a little now and then, it is only as a brother might tease you. He wishes you to think of him in every way as your brother. It always wounds me when you call him Mr. Goring."

"I shall never call him anything else," said Daphne sullenly.

"And if you do not marry as soon as I do——"

"I shall never marry——"

"Dearest, forgive me for not believing that. If you are not married next year you will have a second home at the Abbey. Gerald and I have chosen the rooms we intend for you; charmingly fantastical rooms in one of the Gothic towers, just such a nest as will delight you."

"You are all that is good, but I don't suppose I shall be able often to occupy them. When you are married it will be my duty to dance attendance upon papa, and to try and make him like me. I don't suppose I shall ever succeed; but I mean to make the effort, however unpleasant it may be to both of us."

"My sweet one, you are sure to win his love. Who could help loving you?"

"My father has helped it, all this time," answered Daphne, still moody, and with downcast eyes.

When Edgar and his mother came back to Hawksyard cub-hunting was in full swing, and Mr. Turchill rose at five o'clock three mornings a week, to ride long distances to the appointed spot where the chase was to begin. He rode with two sets of hounds, making nothing of distance. He bought himself a fifth hunter—having four good ones already—which latest acquisition was naturally supposed to overtop all the rest in strength, pace, and beauty. His mother began to fear that the stables would be her son's ruin.

"Three thousand a year was considered a large income when your father and I were married," she said; "but it's a small one now for a country gentleman in your position. We ought to be careful, Edgar."

"Who said we were going to be careless, mother mine? I am sure you are a model among housewives," said Edgar lightly.

"You've taken on a new man in the stable, I hear, Edgar—to attend to your new horse, I suppose."

"Only a new boy at fourteen bob a week, mother. We were rather short-handed."

"Short-handed! With four men!"

Edgar could not stop to debate the matter. It was nine o'clock, and he was eating a hurried breakfast before starting on his useful covert-hack for Snitterfield, where the hounds were to meet. It was to be the first meet of the season, an occasion for some excitement. Pleasant to see all the old company, with a new face or two perhaps among them, and a sprinkling of new horses—young ones whose education

had only just begun. Edgar was going to exhibit his new mare, an almost thoroughbred black, and was all aglow with pride at the thought of the admiration she would receive. He looked his best in his well-worn red coat, new buckskins, and perfect boots.

"I hope you'll be careful, Edgar," said his mother, hanging about him in the hall, "and that you won't go taking desperate jumps with that new mare. She has a nasty vicious look in her hind legs, which I don't at all like; and yesterday, when I opened the stable-door to speak to Baker, she put back her ears."

"A horse may do that without being an absolute fiend, mother. Black Pearl is the kindest creature in Christendom. Good-bye."

"Dinner at eight, I suppose," sighed Mrs. Turchill, who preferred an earlier hour.

"Yes, if you don't mind. It gives me plenty of time for a bath. Ta, ta."

He had swung himself on to the thick-set chestnut roadster, and was trotting merrily away on the other side of the drawbridge, before his mother had finished her regretful sighs. The groom had gone on before with Black Pearl. These hunting mornings were the only occasions on which Mr. Turchill forgot his disappointment. The keen delight of fresh air, a fast run, pleasant company, familiar voices, brushed away all dark thoughts. For the moment he lived only to fly across the level fields, in a country which seemed altogether changed from the scene of his daily walks and rides; all familiar things—hedges, hills, commons, brooks—taking a look of newness, as if he were galloping through a world fresh made. For the moment he lived as the bird lives, a thing of life and motion, a creature too swift for thought or pain or care. Then after the day's hard riding came the lazy homeward walk side by side with a friend, and friendly talk about horses and dogs and neighbours. Then a dinner, for which even a lover's appetite showed no sign of decay. Then pleasant exhaustion; a cigar; a nap; and a long night of dreamless rest.

No doubt it was this relief afforded by the hunting season which saved Mr. Turchill from exhibiting himself in the dejected condition which Rosalind declared was an essential mark of a lover. No lean cheek or sunken eye, neglected beard or sullen spirit, marked Edgar when he came to South Hill. He seemed so much at his

ease, and had so much to tell about that first meet at Snitterfield, and the delightful run which followed it, that Daphne was confirmed in her idea that in affairs of the heart Mr. Turchill belonged to the weather-cock species.

"If he could get over your rejection of him, you may suppose how easily he would get over mine," she said to her sister.

Yet she was very glad to have Edgar back again: to be able to order him about, to beat him at billiards, or waltz with him in the dusky hall between five o'clock tea and dinner, while Lina played for them in the adjacent morning-room. In this one accomplishment Daphne was teacher, and a most imperious mistress.

"If you expect me to be seen dancing with you at the Hunt Ball, you must improve vastly between this and January," she said in her loftiest manner.

PRESENTED AT COURT.

THE title of this article may perhaps stand its writer in good stead, by obtaining for him readers who would, if the chapter depended only on its intrinsic merits, pass indifferently on. Not without authority and experience does the writer venture upon his subject, for he has been presented at court on several occasions, and can boast that he has been on speaking terms with some of its chief officers—when he explains that he means the county court, some of his readers may know what kind of men its officers are, without further description. This sketch is not intended to discuss abstruse legal questions, the law being ever a pitfall and a snare, even to the best writers, and it has always been a marvel to me—I cannot help slipping into the first person, I find—why Anthony Trollope's suggestion, that a number of professional authors should retain, by a joint-stock fund, the services of a solicitor, to keep them out of the blunders into which they otherwise would, and do, fall, has not been adopted.

The architecture of a county court office is generally much akin to that of a police court, and the hangers-on who may be always found, during business hours, at its entrance and about its lobbies, have little to boast of, in the way of respectability, over those who loiter, at certain times, round the gates of the other establishment. This is a phenomenon which has always puzzled me, and wiser men than I: why

the hangers-on of our law courts should be such broken, seedy, raffish-looking men as they are. The county court, being the minor (or minimus) of the courts, has naturally a shabbier, frowsier class of retainers even than the others. As no person familiar with railways has much difficulty in picking out a driver or fireman, when he sees him; as a policeman is generally recognisable by those who care to scrutinise, disguise himself as he will; as clergymen, actors, and a multitude of others carry their trades and professions legibly imprinted on their features, and manifest in their air, gait, and manner, so is the county court officer—especially the supernumerary—as easily recognisable as though his calling were branded in bold type upon his forehead.

Those who have been interested in watching the experiment involved in the establishment of county courts, are hardly as unanimous as might be wished in pronouncing them an improvement on the old courts of requests, and similar obsolete machinery; but they are pretty well agreed that the extension of the system is inevitable, and that, as addition after addition has been made to the scope and power of these courts in years past, so they will be made in years to come. I am not about to consider whether cheap law is an unadulterated blessing in any case—not that I consider a contested county court suit very cheap at the money—but I readily admit that there exists a very widely spread litigious spirit, which would with difficulty find a vent but for some such courts as these. This spirit prevails to a great extent among the Irish population of our large towns. Go into what court you please, and you will probably find in the plaintiffs, or defendants, or witnesses, or all of them, an undue proportion of Hibernian names and faces—and really the evidence of some of them is wonderful. Without any intention, as it seems to me, of wilfully deceiving, they wander from the point at every sentence, drag in the most irrelevant matters, and offer threefold hearsay evidence with a confidence and to an extent which must sometimes make a lawyer's flesh "creep." I have heard a witness of this class, who was called to prove a fact on which the plaintiff's case turned, depose that she was in a house, when some little girl came in and told her mother what she had heard somebody else say at some other house, and beyond this the "witness" knew nothing whatever of the matter. Meeting with a succession of such incidents probably tries the temper

of county court judges, and gives them an air which has gained for them a reputation of being habitually harsh and irritable. That they often have this reputation is unluckily so certain, as to leave very little doubt of the fact itself.

I once heard brought out in the course of a trial—if the ten minutes' hearing be a trial—a statement which very much surprised me then, and surprised me still more when I verified the assertion. I was in Bristol, and, being in the county court, heard a case decided where a Londoner, who had settled in the ancient city, was summoned for a quarter's rent. His defence was that he had given due warning; the landlord disputed this, and then the tenant proved that he had given it on the 23rd of December, "Which," retorted the landlord, "is two days after quarter-day." "What!" exclaimed the judge; "two days after quarter-day? Everyone knows that the twenty-fifth is quarter-day—Christmas Day." "Not in Bristol, your honour," said all the attendant lawyers in chorus. "Not in Bristol!" echoed the amazed judge. "No, your honour," was the reply; "in Bristol we make the twenty-first quarter-day." And so it was settled, and so, on enquiry, I found it was generally understood. This is very ridiculous, but some of my readers may find it useful to know the fact should they go to reside in Bristol. The city is a favourite of mine among cities, and its residents are of the kindest, but they do cling with too great obstinacy to their old ways. Only a little while back, as it seems—but it is thirty years I find by the register—the corporation decided that London time should not be kept by their clocks. The result was that innumerable mistakes arose, and trains were continually being missed by the good people of the town, while with strangers it was still worse, until the very odd phenomenon was exhibited of nearly every clock in every shop having three hands; one minute hand showed the local, the other the railway time, occasioning no small perplexity to those who beheld the arrangement for the first time. It was really much such a difficulty as is caused by Russia obstinately adhering to the old style calendar, and so being always ten or twelve days behind the rest of Europe in its dates; but Bristol has yielded to the innovation, and so some day will Russia.

To get back, however, to county courts; it may surprise those who are not experienced in such matters, to learn that it is

not at all uncommon for a single plaintiff to enter so many cases for hearing at once that the whole of a day is specially assigned to him, and the judge gives an extra sitting. These plaintiffs are usually drapers—such drapers as are perhaps better known as "tallymen"—or loan societies. The private lender of loans now generally takes a bill of sale, which simplifies matters, as the defaulting debtor finds; but loan societies, although the bill of sale is growing more common with them, are usually satisfied with a promissory note. The sympathy of the judge seldom sets strongly in favour of the plaintiffs in such instances, although from the precaution the money-lenders take, in having their customers names on stamped paper, there is rarely much chance of their meeting with an adverse judgment; nevertheless, so far as sympathy can be shown, the defendants have it.

Any one who chooses so to spend his leisure days, may sometimes, amid the multitude of dull, miserable cases which constitute the staple of county court business, light upon one which will move the audience to laughter. I once listened to a specially queer one. The case "Boddle and Ponson" was called, in three or four voices, without a response, and the invariable "Call the next case" would have been heard, when a cracked, harsh voice said, in a much higher key than is customary in the sacred precincts of justice, "Well! why didn't you say so?" And then a man with his head a great deal on one side, and a very old hat upon it, with a very shabby long great-coat, and two umbrellas under his left arm, was seen unceremoniously elbowing his way to the box. A certain fixed stare warned an usher that the man was deaf, and he hastily indicated, by signs, that he should take his hat off. "Oh! very well," said the shabby man loudly, and he thereupon very deliberately placed both his umbrellas, and then his hat, upon the floor, after which he was duly sworn. By this time a comfortable, tradesman-like person confronted him. "Are you the plaintiff?" said the registrar. "What?" demanded the loud voice. On the question being repeated, he said, still in the same high key and with the same harsh voice: "Yes, of course I am; and so would any man be." "What is this five pounds claimed for?" said the judge. "What does he say?" demanded the plaintiff, and on the information being bawled out, replied: "What is it for? Why for knocking

me down in the Tottenham Court Road with a light pony-cart whereby I caught a pleurisy in the side and lost my hearing to that extent that I couldn't foller my calling which if he had drawn back ever so little the unfortunate accident which follered soon after wouldn't have occurred." He had evidently rehearsed all this, for he spoke it straight off, without the slightest punctuation, and at the finish confronted the judge with a stare which was determined, if not spiteful. "But," said his honour, "you must tell me more particularly how it took place." "What?" cried the deaf plaintiff. The judge repeated his question. "What does he say?" demanded Mr. Boddle, turning abruptly to an official. Again was the question roared in his ear, and then, with a look expressive of his amazement at his previous statement not having been deemed sufficient, he resumed: "Well, I tell you, I was going from 'Amstead Road to Tottenham Court Road, and it was a very wet night. As I was a crossing over, which there was a gal with oranges just in front of me, and a baked 'tater man close behind, and this party come along in his light pony-cart and knocked me down, whereby I caught a pleurisy in my side and lost my hearing to that extent I couldn't foller my calling which if he had drawn back ever so little the unfortunate accident which follered soon after wouldn't have occurred." "Have you any witnesses?" asked the judge. "What?" said Mr. Boddle. "The judge says, 'Have you any witnesses?'" roared the usher; "have you any one here who saw you knocked down?" "No, of course not," tartly responded the plaintiff; "I didn't know I was going to be run over, did I? so how could I take anybody with me to see it? But, of course, it was all his fault, for he was a-coming along at a dangerous rate in a light pony-cart and if he had drawn back ever so little the unfortunate accident which follered soon after wouldn't have occurred." No better account could be drawn from the poor fellow, and the defendant was called upon. He told what seemed a very fair story, and was supported by the policeman who was on duty at the spot—the latter proving that he had actually warned the plaintiff against crossing at that moment, but in vain.

This evidence determined the suit, but Mr. Boddle had not heard a word of it; he evidently considered that they were going through some necessary forms, but that

nothing could prevent the issue of the trial from being in his favour. The judge's fiat was dead against him, and the defendant asked for costs; his honour, however, pointed to the squalid condition of the plaintiff, and asked if he really wished to insist on them, on which the defendant waived his claim. "Judgment for the defendant!" shouted the usher in the plaintiff's ear. "Yes; well, what then?" demanded the latter. "Judgment, I say, for the defendant!" was again bawled. "Very well; when am I to have the money?" asked Mr. Boddle. "Bless the man!" exclaimed the usher, hoarse with shouting. "You have lost! He has got judgment." "WHAT!!" almost shrieked the plaintiff, in a tone which capitals and notes of admiration feebly typify; "what! and aint I to have nothing for his knocking me down at the top of Tottenham Court Road with a light pony-cart whereby—" "You ought to be much obliged to him," said the judge, catching his eye; "for not asking for costs." "What does he say?" demanded the plaintiff of the usher. "His honour says you ought to be much obliged to the defendant—" He would have explained why, but, with an absolute yell, the plaintiff cried: "Very much obliged to him! What! for knocking me down with a fast pony-cart whereby I caught a pleurisy in my side and lost my hearing to that extent that I couldn't foller my calling when if he had drawn back ever so little the unfortunate accident which follered soon after—" "There!" said the official, thrusting his papers into his hand; "make room for the next case." "Well—but—but aint I to have no money?" cried the plaintiff, resisting the gentle pressure of the usher; "no money for being knocked—" Then I say it's a blessed shame!" He used a much stronger and commoner adjective than "blessed," but, whatever he said, it was roared at the very top of his voice, and then, slamming his hat on to his head, and hitching his battered umbrellas well under his arm, he left the court amid the uncontrollable laughter of almost every soul in it.

One very fruitful source of county court business are disputes between masters and servants; mistresses and servants would be the better description, although, as a matter of course, the master is the nominal defendant; and these cases are sure to be contested with amazing obstinacy. Do what the ushers may, the plaintiff

and defendant will wrangle, and taunt each other across the court; while the accuracy with which every peccadillo on either side is raked up, does the highest credit to the memories of the contending parties. That totally irrelevant matter is continually dragged into these cases, that assertion is preferred to evidence, and that tears are always resorted to, is only what the reader would expect. The judge, I imagine, is generally puzzled as to where the injury lies; whether the mistress really sent Mary Anne off at a moment's notice, or whether Mary Anne, after an outbreak of insolence, took herself suddenly away. These are some of the cases in which I pity the judges.

I do not intend to infringe on my resolve of not venturing to discuss difficult legal questions, but no one can help seeing that in dispensing the rough and ready justice for which the courts are famed, doctrines are sometimes laid down which startle the listener. This must be the case when a man has to decide, his labour enduring through a long weary day, a couple of hundred squabbles—in his eyes they must seem no better—on the most contemptible matters, and argued in the most sordid interests. Nevertheless, although this may account for strange decisions, it does not make them more palatable, or prevent them from frequently clashing with other ruling. I was once in a county court when I saw something handed about among the bar and the privileged few who sat with them, which occasioned a good deal of merriment, and presently I saw that it was a *carte de visite*. I found that a certain London company had been sued for the money paid for an unsatisfactory photograph, which the sitter alleged was not like her, the company refusing to return the amount, or to execute another without additional payment; and this picture, which the representatives of the company and those around them, were making so merry over, was the lady's *carte de visite*. So far there was nothing very extraordinary, such disputes occur, doubtless, every day, but two points came out in the trial which astonished me, as they probably will the unprofessional reader. It appeared that the company, after a sitting, would not allow the sitter to see his or her negative; if the artist was satisfied, that was enough. The plaintiff in this case argued, fairly enough, I thought, that as no opportunity was afforded for inspection, the company

took all responsibility in the matter, especially as this rule was not made known to the customer until after the money was paid. But the judge laid down the law thus: the contract was for a picture; well, you received a picture. In his opinion, the so-called portrait, which was of course shown to him, was not at all like, but that had nothing to do with the case: a *carte de visite* had been contracted for, and there it was. If it had been the portrait of a totally different person, the contract would still have been fulfilled, and the company free. The reader can imagine the amazement in the audience at this doctrine, and the consternation of the plaintiff, but the fiat was given, and no more could be done, *Caveat emptor*, said the judge. What made confusion more confounded was the fact that, only a few weeks after, I saw a report of a trial in the Sheriff's Court where Mr. Commissioner Kerr had ruled exactly the opposite to this; and the portrait in the case decided by him not being a satisfactory one, the money paid for it was returned, as, he said, it must be in any contract not properly carried out. Now how does the law stand? I have not the slightest idea.

As all know, imprisonment for debt is now abolished, excepting for cases in the county courts; the debtor, however, is not punished for owing the money, but for not paying it when ordered to do so, which is contempt of court. So the small debtor may be sent to "quod" while the larger one may not. This is odd, and only one reason is offered in explanation, which, in its character, is odder still. It is said that the working classes are almost unanimous in the wish that their creditors should retain the power to send them to jail, lest their facilities for obtaining credit should be diminished. To this I can only say that to argue thus is giving the lower classes credit for a keen sense of political economy utterly denied to their superiors, who appear to have been very glad to get rid of such a provision; that it is a remarkable and solitary instance of the masses preferring a future possible good to an immediate benefit; that it is opposed to the result of all my enquiries; and that, finally, I do not believe a word of it. It is by no means in my province to discuss whether imprisonment for debt be a good or a bad power for a creditor to hold, although I have a very strong opinion on the subject, but I am quite sure that

if it be a good thing to imprison, upon a county court judgment, a debtor who owes, we will say, five pounds, it is a positive hardship to withhold this boon from the ranks so much above these small people—from debtors who owe their five hundred or five thousand pounds in Piccadilly or on 'Change.

This power of committal is the most embarrassing duty which falls to the lot of the county court judge, as anyone can see who will attend when the judgment summonses are being tried. On the one hand is the undeniable claim of the creditor, himself often a struggling tradesman; on the other, the debtor's declaration, from his appearance too evidently true, that he is in absolute want, and that his family lack food and clothing. In these cases I am sure I do not envy the judge of the county court.

THE PARISH CLERK.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

I HAVE already said, that, at the last census, three women were returned as parish clerks. They may, possibly, have been widows, to whom were continued the salaries received by their husbands, and the duties of leading the responses in church may have been discharged by deputies. But a woman can serve the office of an overseer (and has done so, recently, in the country parish where I write these lines); and it was also decided in the case of *Olive v. Ingram* (2 Strange, 1,114) that a woman might be the parish sexton.* It might, therefore, be contended that she was legally entitled to serve the office of a parish clerk. That she has done so in numerous instances will be seen from the following examples; though that "poor, wretched, ragged woman, a female clerk," who is mentioned in *Madame D'Arblay's Diary*, as showing her the church of Collumpton, Devon, paid a man for doing the Sunday duty, while she received the salary in right of her deceased husband. About forty years ago, Mrs.

* In the year 1857, there were, at least, three female sextons (or "sextonesses") in the City of London, viz.: Mrs. Crook, at St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury; Mrs. E. Worley, at St. Laurence Jewry, King Street; and Mrs. Stapelton, St. Michael's, Wood Street. About the year 1867, I remember Mrs. Noble being sextoness of St. John the Baptist, Peterborough. The Annual Register for 1759 mentions an extraordinary centenarian sextoness: "Died, April 30, Mary Hall, sexton of Bishop Hill, York City, aged one hundred and five; she walked about and retained her senses till within three days of her death."

Sheldon, widow of the parish clerk of Wheatley, near Cuddesdon, five miles from Oxford, continued to discharge, during divine service, the duties that had been performed by her husband. Mrs. Poffley, in the first quarter of the present century, was parish clerk of Avington, near Hungerford, for the period of twenty-six years. Up to the year 1832, Mary Mountford was parish clerk of Misterton, near Crewkerne, Somersetshire, for upwards of thirty years. At Ickburgh, Norfolk, a woman was acting as parish clerk so recently as 1853, and had then been the clerk for some years. About the year 1830 the female parish clerk at Sudbrook, near Lincoln, died, after discharging the duties of the office for several years. The Rev. H. T. Ellacombe remembered "a gentlewoman" acting as the parish clerk "of some church in London." Burn, in his work on Parish Registers, cites a very noteworthy instance, in an extract from the parish register of Totteridge: "1802. March 2. Buried Elizabeth King, widow, for forty-six years clerk of this parish, in the ninety-first year of her age."

In numerous instances the office of parish clerk has been hereditary, and has been held by members of the same family through more than a century. As a boy I often attended the service at Belbroughton Church, Worcestershire, where the parish clerk was Mr. Osborne, tailor. His family had there been parish clerks and tailors since the time of Henry the Eighth, and were lineally descended from William FitzOsborne, who, in the twelfth century, had been deprived by Ralph FitzHerbert of his right to the manor of Bellem, in the parish of Belbroughton. Often have I stood in the picturesque churchyard of Wolverley, Worcestershire, by the grave of its old parish clerk, whom I well remember, old Thomas Worrall, the inscription on whose monument is as follows: "Sacred to the Memory of Thomas Worrall, parish clerk of Wolverley for a period of forty-seven years. Died A.D. 1854, February 23rd. Aged seventy-six years."

"He served with faithfulness in humble sphere,
As one who could his talent well employ,
Hope that when Christ his Lord shall reappear,
He may be bidden to his Master's joy."

"This tombstone was erected to the memory of the deceased by a few of the parishioners in testimony of his worth. April, 1855. Charles R. Somers Cocks, vicar." It may be noted of this worthy

parish clerk that, with the exception of a week or two before his death, he was never once absent from his Sunday and week-day duties in the forty-seven years during which he held office. He succeeded his father, James Worrall, who died in 1806, aged seventy-nine, after being parish clerk of Wolverley for thirty years. His tombstone, near to that of his son, was erected "to record his worth both in his public and private character, and as a mark of personal esteem—h. l. f. h. & w. c. p. c." I am told that these initials stand for F. Hurtle and the Rev. William Callow, and that the latter was the author of the following lines inscribed on the monument, which are well worth quoting :

If courtly bards adorn each statesman's bust,
And strew their laurels o'er each warrior's dust
Alike immortalise, as good and great,
Him who enalaved as him who saved the state,
Surely the muse (a rustic minstrel) may
Drop one wild flower upon a poor man's clay ;
This artless tribute to his memory give
Whose life was such as heroes seldom live.
In worldly knowledge, poor indeed his store—
He knew the village and he scarce knew more.
The worth of heavenly truth he justly knew—
In faith a Christian, and in practice too.
Yes, here lies one, excel him ye who can ;
Go ! imitate the virtues of that man !

Mr. John Noake, in his *Notes and Queries for Worcestershire* (Longmans, 1856), besides mentioning the Osbornes and Worralls, says that Mr. David Clarkson, the parish clerk of Feckenham, died in 1854, and that his ancestors had occupied the same office for two centuries. The Fields were parish clerks of Kingsnorton for the same period, two of them holding the office for one hundred and two years. The Roses were also parish clerks at Bromsgrove from "time out of mind." The Bonds were parish clerks at St. Michael's, Worcester, for a century. John Tustin had in 1856 been parish clerk of Broadway for fifty-two years, his father and grandfather having previously held the office. Charles Orford died at Oldswinford, December 28th, 1855, aged seventy-three, having been the parish clerk "from his youth," and having succeeded his father in that capacity, and being succeeded by his son. These examples, taken from one county, Worcestershire, are sufficient to show—without adducing instances from other counties—that the office of parish clerk is frequently hereditary.*

* I will, however, here give one remarkable example from Derbyshire. Mr. Peter Bramwell, parish clerk of Chapel-en-le-Frith, died January 23, 1854, aged eighty-six, after having held office for forty-three years. His father, Peter Bramwell, was parish clerk of the same place for fifty years ; his

A poem, containing a description of the duties—and also some of the pleasures—of a parish clerk, was written by Mr. Robert Story, a native of Northumberland, schoolmaster and parish clerk of Gargrave, Yorkshire, and published in his volume of verse, *The Magic Fountain, and other Poems* (1829). As it is the production of a self-educated parish clerk I quote that portion relating to his duties and pleasures of office :

Learn next that I am parish clerk :
A noble office, by St. Mark !
It brings me in six guineas clear,
Besides et cæteras every year.
I waive my Sunday duty, when
I give the solemn deep Amen ;
Exalted then to breathe aloud
The heart-devotion of the crowd.
But, oh, the fun ! when Christmas chimes
Have usher'd in the festal times,
And sent the clerk and sexton round
To pledge their friends in draughts profound,
And keep on foot the good old plan,
As only clerk and sexton can !
Nor less the sport, when Easter sees
The daisy spring to deck her leas ;
Then, claim'd as dues by Mother Church,
I pluck the cackler from the perch ;
Or, in its place, the shilling clasp
From grumbling dame's slow opening grasp.
But, Visitation Day ! 'tis thine
Best to deserve my native line.
Great day ! the purest, brightest gem,
That decks the fair year's diadem.
Grand day ! that sees me costless dine,
And costless quaff the rosy wine,
Till seven churchwardens doubled seem,
And doubled every taper's gleam ;
And I, triumphant over time,
And over tune, and over rhyme,
Call'd by the gay, convivial throng,
Lead, in full glee, the choral song !

Mr. Story was probably exceptionally invited to the Visitation Dinner on account of his "convivial qualities," and also his extra rank as schoolmaster. Of another North-countryman, who was both parish clerk and schoolmaster, it is related that when he was compelled to resign his scholastic duties to a qualified teacher from a training college, he heard the new master tell his pupils : "'A' is an indefinite article. 'A' is one, and can only be applied to one thing. You cannot say a cats, a dogs ; but only a cat, a dog." Upon this, the clerk said to his rector : "Here's a pretty fellow you've got to keep school ! He says that you can only apply the article 'a' to nouns of the singular number ; and here have I been saying 'A-men' all my life, and your reverence has never once corrected me."

grandfather, George Bramwell, for thirty-eight years ; his great-great-grandfather, George Bramwell, for forty years ; and his great-great-grandfather, Peter Bramwell, for fifty-two years. Total, two hundred and twenty-three years, by five members of one family, giving an average of forty-four years and nine months for each.

I knew one who combined the offices of schoolmaster and parish clerk, who was particularly vain of his reading. He told me that it was always the remark of strangers as well as parishioners, that he and the vicar were the best readers for miles around, though it was evident that it was only from compliment that he included the vicar in his praise. Like many others in his profession, he was the village oracle, and often filled up a gap in giving away a bride or in standing godfather to a child. He might have been that man of importance described by Alexander Pope, in his *Memoirs of P.P., Clerk of this Parish*, wherein Burnet's *History of His Own Times* was satirised: "Thou mayest conceive, O reader, with what concern I perceived the eyes of the congregation fixed upon me when I first took my place at the feet of the priest. When I raised the psalm, how did my voice quiver for fear! And when I arrayed the shoulders of the minister with the surplice how did my joints tremble under me! . . . Notwithstanding which it was my good hap to acquit myself to the good liking of the whole congregation; but God forbid I should glory therein!"

When a clergyman had gone to take the duty for a friend, and was leaving the church, he looked at the sky and made a remark to the parish clerk as to the probable weather on the morrow, when the clerk replied: "Ah, sir, they do say that the hypocrites can discern the face of the sky." Another parish clerk apologised to a church dignitary who had been summoned to take a service at a small village church: "I am sorry, sir, to have brought such a gentleman as you to this poor little place. A worse would have done if we had only known where to find him!"

It is said of a clergyman, who so forgot the proprieties of his office that in reading the churching service to a lady of title, he altered the words "save this woman" to "save this lady," upon which the courtly parish clerk promptly made the very natural response, "Who putteth her ladyship's trust in Thee." The Rev. Prebendary Jackson, in speaking of Yorkshire clergymen within his own recollection, says, concerning a village church where there was only one Sunday service, in the afternoon: "Often while the parson was in the middle of his discourse, the powdered yellow plush of the squire, whose ancient mansion adjoined the churchyard, would enter the priest's door in the chancel, and, advancing

to the front of the pulpit, would say in a respectful, but somewhat peremptory and authoritative voice: 'If you please, sir, my master bids me inform you that dinner is waiting!' The old curate then closed his book, gave the benediction, and set off to join his patron's well-spread board."

Another courteous rector was one, in a northern county, who was in the habit of not beginning divine service until he had satisfied himself that the squire was duly ensconced in the family pew, but happening one Sunday to omit ascertaining the fact, he had gone into the reading-desk and had commenced "When the wicked man—" when he was instantly stopped by the faithful clerk, who exclaimed, "He ain't come in, sir!" This is a well-known story, and is perhaps apocryphal, but something similar happened to a friend of mine, who did his first duty after his ordination as deacon in a village church to which he had been appointed curate, his rector being engaged at a second church in another part of the parish. The old parish clerk, after ringing the two bells at the west end of the church, came up to the chancel where the curate had put on his surplice behind the high-curtained end of the squire's pew, the church not boasting a vestry, and was looking at his watch with a nervous anxiety to keep to the exact time for beginning his first service. To his surprise the clerk, after saying to him in an audible voice, "You must wait a bit, sir, we ain't ready!" stepped into the communion area, clambered on to the communion table, and stood upon it while he looked through the east window, and carefully scrutinised the churchyard path that led past the window to a door in the wall of the squire's garden, through which his wife, who was a lady of title, was accustomed to come to church with her children. The curate was full of George Herbert's and Keble's reverence for holy places, and was aghast at the sight of the parish clerk thus standing on the communion table in full sight of the congregation, and coolly turning round from his inspection through the east window and saying to the curate in an audible voice: "You moant begin yet. Her ladyship baint come!" "Pray come down," expostulated the curate. "I can see best where I be," replied the imperturbable clerk. "I'm watching the garden door. Here she be, and the squire!" upon which he descended from his position, greatly to the curate's relief. As the incident excited no surprise

among the rustic congregation, it probably was of frequent occurrence.

When my friend had come to an end of that eventful service, and had disrobed, for it was in days when the black gown was worn in the pulpit, the clerk said to him very cheerfully: "They'd all see as you was a beginner!" "Indeed, how?" asked the curate, who had flattered himself that he had gone through the service without making any mistake. "Why, you left out some at the Absolution!" said the triumphant clerk; and it was in vain for the curate to inform him that, as he was only in deacon's orders, he had not the power to read the Absolution, and was therefore legally compelled to omit it. The clerk still preserved his original opinion, somewhat modified afterwards by the explanation to his friends: "He ain't old enough for it yet." But, on one Sunday in summer, when the squire and his family were in town, and the squire's pew was empty, he helped my friend out of an unexpected difficulty. The curate had walked across the fields from his distant lodgings, after having taken the usual precautions to prevent his faithful companion, a skye-terrier named Mac, from following him. But when he had reached the village Sunday-school Mac put in an unexpected appearance at the curate's heels. The only thing that could be done was to shut up Mac in the outhouse of a cottage until the conclusion of service, and this was done. But the skye, by dint of scratching and wriggling, contrived to effect his escape, and when the curate was reading the second lesson, he was dismayed to see Mac trotting into church through the door which had been left open on account of the heat, and then, on hearing his master's voice, and discovering the spot from whence it proceeded, he wagged his tail, and advanced up the aisle with those wriggles of delight which are peculiar to the breed. The clerk stepped out, and, opening the door of the old-fashioned reading-desk, said: "You'd better take him in along wi' you!" and the curate, seeing that this was the best policy to pursue under the emergency, allowed Mac to be shut in the reading-desk, where he curled himself up into a shaggy ball and made himself quite happy. Whipping dogs out of church was formerly one of the ordinary items of expense that were allowed in the churchwardens' accounts; and in the celebrated picture of Old Scarlett, that is hung against the western wall of the nave of Peterborough

Cathedral, he is depicted with his dog-whip thrust through his girdle. As in his case, the office of dog-whipper was usually performed by the sexton; but, although in so many parishes the sexton and parish clerk were, and are, one and the same person, I shall not, in this paper, revert to the peculiar duties of the sexton.

An odd parish clerk was that of another country village, who was showing to a friend of mine a stained-glass window which had just been placed in the church to the memory of a gentleman and lady deceased. It was a two-light window, with figures of Moses and Aaron. "There they are, sir! but they don't much feature the old couple," said the clerk, who regarded them as likenesses of the lady and gentleman deceased. This same clerk, when ill, and visited by his rector, said to him: "Yes, sir; we're all on us born to trouble. It's just what you tells us in your sermons, when you says as you must set your backs well up agin your troubles, and then you're bound to ruggle through 'em." As the rector particularly prided himself on the elegance of his diction when in the pulpit, he was not a little annoyed at the way in which his clerk had interpreted his sermon. Another parish clerk said to a friend of mine who was taking the duty in a strange church: "There's a woman has brought two children to be christened. One of 'em's not been done at all; but the t'other's been half done, and she'd like to have him finished." He meant by this, that the one child had been privately baptised, but had not yet been received into the Church.

The Rev. Richard Polwhele in his History of Cornwall, says that "at no great distance from St. Anthony, a wreck happening on a Sunday morning, the clerk announced to the parishioners just assembled that "measter would gee them a holiday." This is a fact; but whether measter cried out as his flock were rushing from the church, "Stop, stop, let us start fair!" I will not aver. This anecdote was told in The Encyclopædia of Wit (1801) in the following terms: "A parson who lived on the coast of Cornwall, where one great business of the inhabitants is plundering from the ships that are wrecked, being once preaching when the alarm was given, found that the sound of a wreck was so much more attractive than his sermon, that all his congregation were scampering out of church. To check their precipitation, he called out, "My brethren, let me entreat you to stay

only five words more;" and marching out of the pulpit till he had got pretty near the door of the church, slowly pronounced, 'Let us all start fair,' and ran off with the rest of them."

Fuller, in his *Triple Reconciler*, said: "Sad the times in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth, when the clergy were commanded to read the chapters over once or twice by themselves, that so they might be the better enabled to read them distinctly to the congregation." But if the general ignorance of the country clergy made "painful hearers" of their congregations, what must it have been for the hearers, when, at a later date, it was the custom to allow the parish clerk to read the lessons? The pronunciation of the more difficult words was exceedingly arbitrary, and proper names were mangled or skipped, after the fashion of the mistress of the dame-school, who was wont to say when a small pupil paused at such a name as Nebuchadnezzar, "That's a bad word, child! go on to the next verse." The Rev. R. Polwhele says, in his *Cornish Recollections*: "A very short time since, parish clerks used to read the first lesson. I once heard the St. Agnes clerk cry out: 'At the mouth of the burning viery vurnis, Shadrac, Meshac, and Abednego, com voath and com hether.'" It is said of a Devonshire parish clerk who had to read this lesson, that, instead of repeating these three proper names, he said at their second and third recurrence, "the aforesaid gentlemen," and that in the same chapter, instead of repeating the words concerning the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psalter, dulcimer, he said, "the band as before." This anecdote is gravely ascribed to "a London incumbent," in *A Voice from a Mask*, by Domino (1851). I have heard a parish clerk say "Ananias, Azarias, and Mizzle," and I have been told of one who called "that great Leviathan," "that great leather thing," and of another who talked of the "owl in the dessert," thereby calling up visions of the after-dinner refection. A parish clerk to whom I was accustomed to listen, used to say in the marriage service, "O well is thee, and oppy sholt thou be," while he prolonged painfully the last syllable in "The rich he hath sent empty awaii," raising his tone as though it was an interrogation. Similarly he dwelt on the "a" in "Libanus like a caaf;" and in the thirty-ninth Psalm, he always said "like as it were a moath fretting in a garment," and in the next verse that he also had to read, he also interpolated a syllable, for he

said, "a sojourner as all my forefathers were." Perhaps he thought that as a man can but have one father, there was an error in our authorised version. I have really heard a parish clerk say, "a lion to my mother's children," and I imagine that this error must have been traditionally handed down through generations of parish clerks; for the Rev. John Eagles in his *Essays*, writing in 1837, said of a clerk in his own neighbourhood who spoke of going to church "to hear the baboons," meaning bassoons; "he invariably reads Cheberims and Spherims, and most unequivocally 'I am a lion to my mother's children,' and really he sometimes looks not unlike one." About twenty years ago, a newspaper paragraph ascribed this anecdote to "the clerk of a parish in Worcestershire," with this highly original addition: "True enough," said an old lady, applying the word in season, "you put your brother in the county court, you wretch, you did." But the anecdote has an earlier date; for about a century ago, when Francis Grose was writing *On Slip-slopping, or the Mis-application of Words*, he said: "Even the Church service itself is not exempt from this kind of slip-sloppery. Almost every parish clerk is a lion, instead of an alien, among his mother's children; and one I remember went to a length still more extravagant. In that verse in the chapter of Revelations describing the New Jerusalem, wherein it is said the doors were of agate and the windows carbuncles, the honest fellow read, 'the doors were of a gate, and the windows crabs ancles.'"

Another clerk who had to give out the psalm, "Like a timorous bird, to distant mountains fly," always said, "Like a temmersum burde," with a shake of the head and a quavering of the voice that provoked risibility in the hearer. Of another parish clerk it is said that when many fees were coming to him from funerals and marriages, he was fond of giving out the psalm: "My soul, praise the Lord;" but that if there was a deficiency of fees, he selected the psalm: "How long wilt thou forget me?"

The lax custom of permitting the parish clerk to give out notices in church, must, occasionally, have led to unforeseen results. Thus, some thirty years ago, I was told of a parish clerk who gave out, in his rector's hearing, this notice: "There'll be no service next Sunday, as the rector's going out grouse-shooting!" the rector having inadvertently told him of the reason for his approaching absence. Another rector who had lost his favourite setter,

told his parish clerk to make enquiries about it; but was rather astonished to hear him give it out as a notice in church, coupled with the reward of three pounds if the dog should be restored to his owner. In the year 1853, when the late Mr. George Cruikshank was projecting a monthly magazine, in which I was to write a serial story and otherwise contribute to its pages, he asked me to write an article to introduce some designs that he had prepared relative to certain dangers to teeth. In conversation with him on this subject, I told him of a fact which had recently been narrated to me, to the following effect: An old rector of a small country parish had been compelled to send to a dentist his set of false teeth, in order that some repairs might be made. The dentist had faithfully promised to send them back "by Saturday," but the Saturday's post did not bring the box containing the rector's teeth. There was no Sunday post, and the village was nine miles from the post-town. The dentist, it afterwards appeared, had posted the teeth on the Saturday afternoon with the full conviction that their owner would receive them on the Sunday morning in time for service. The old rector bravely tried to do that duty which England expects every man to do, more especially if he be a parson, and if it be Sunday morning; but, after he had mumbled through the prayers, with equal difficulty and incoherency, he decided that it would be advisable to abandon any further attempts to address his congregation on that day. While the hymn was being sung he summoned the clerk to the vestry, and there said to him: "It is quite useless for me to attempt to go on. The fact is that my dentist has not sent me back my artificial teeth; and, as it is impossible for me to make myself understood, you must tell the congregation that the service is ended for this morning, and that there will be no service this afternoon." The old clerk went back to his desk; the singing of the hymn was brought to an end; and the rector, from his retreat in the vestry, heard his clerk address the congregation as follows: "This is to give notice! as there won't be no sarmon, nor no more sarvice this mornin'; so you'd better all go whum [home]; and there won't be no sarvice this afternoon as the rector ain't got his artful teeth back from the dentist!" George Cruikshank laughed very heartily at this anecdote, and was amazingly tickled with the idea of the

"artful" teeth. He said that he should like to make an illustration to it, and asked me if I could not write a paper on country rectors and their adventures, in which it might be introduced, and which he would further illustrate. But circumstances occurred to prevent the carrying out of this idea, for George Cruikshank's Magazine, edited by Frank E. Smedley, was a short lived failure, and expired at its second number. Thus, Cruikshank's illustration of the foregoing incident was lost to the world.

If the old rector had got into the pulpit and mumbled his sermon, the clerk would probably have had "an exposition of sleep" come upon him, as with the parish clerk described by Cowper in his first book of *The Task*:

Sweet sleep enjoys the curate in his desk,
The tedious rector drawing o'er his head;
And sweet the clerk below.

It was evidently "a three-decker" where this scene occurred.

An answer made by a clerk to his clergyman is given, in verse, in *The Poetical Note Book* (1824), but is not assigned to any author:

A zealous priest, and in his way
A pious man, as people say,
For weeks had miss'd from church and station,
A member of his congregation;
And having long made the remark,
Anxious to learn, he ask'd his clerk,
If he could any cause assign
Why he rejected grace divine.
"I hope, poor man, he's not unwell;
Perhaps become an infidel!
Pray Heaven 'tis not Socinianism
Or any strange fanaticism,
That keeps him from us thus away
And leads him from the flock astray?"
"Oh no, sir," said the clerk, "'tis worse
Than these—alas! a greater curse!"
"What, worse than Socinianism?"
It surely cannot be Deism?"
"Oh, worse than that!" replied the clerk;
"Your worship still is in the dark."
"Worse than Deism, it cannot be!"
"Tis bad enough, sir, I agree."
"Good Lord! 'tis not Atheism sure,
We'll try and work th' apostate's cure!"
"You're wrong again, sir, I confess
The cause is difficult to guess;
'Tis neither heresy nor schism,
But that accursed rheumatism!"

Shakespeare makes King Richard the Second allude to the parish clerk's duty of saying "Amen" (Act iv., Sc. 3):

God save the king!—Will no man say, Amen?
Am I both priest and clerk? well then, Amen!
God save the king! although I be not he;
And yet, Amen, if Heaven do think him me.

As "Amen" is the sign of conclusion, I will finish this paper with a very curious Amen epitaph on a parish clerk who had professionally said "Amen" for a period of thirty years. It is copied from a tomb-

stone in the churchyard of Crayford, Kent.

"Here lieth the body of Peter Snell, thirty years clerk of this parish. He lived respected as a pious and mirthful man, and died on his way to church to assist at a wedding, on the 31 day of March, 1811, aged seventy years. The inhabitants of Crayford have raised this stone to his cheerful memory, and as a tribute to his long and useful services.

"The life of this clerk was just threescore-and-ten, Nearly half of which time he had sung out Amen. In his youth he had married like other young men, But his wife died one day—so he chaunted Amen. A second he took—she departed—what then? He married and buried a third with Amen. Thus his joys and his sorrows were treble, but then His voice was deep bass as he sung out Amen. On the horn he could blow as well as most men, So his horn was exalted in blowing Amen. But he lost all his wind after threescore-and-ten, And here with three wives he waits till again The trumpet shall rouse him to sing out Amen."

THE WINES OF BORDEAUX.

It would appear to be impossible to fix, even approximately, the period when the art of vinification became known to man, and to employ a phrase much used by historians when alluding to the misty past, the introduction of the fermented juice of the grape would seem to date far back into the night of time—so far back as to be utterly beyond our ken. All that can be said is, that the vine originated in the East, and according to the most ancient graved inscriptions and papyrus manuscripts, it may be surmised that wine was drunk by Asian peoples long prior to historic civilisation.

To come down to a comparatively modern land-mark in this immense stretch of ages, it may be mentioned that the Greeks and Romans were past masters in vinification, and that they produced crûs which were renowned among the ancients, and which their verse and prose writers have made famous. As to the method practised in the fabrication nothing is known, though the most astonishing results would seem to have been attained, judging from the fact that wines were produced of such strength, that they required to be diluted with twenty-four parts of water. We find allusion made by Petronius to a Falernian which had reached a hundred years in the prime of conditions, and Pliny speaks of another that had rested in the amphoræ well-nigh two centuries. The latter venerable crû would

seem to have notably increased in body, for the historian tells us that, when the jars were opened, the wine was found to have the consistence of coagulated honey. Of course, in this state, it could hardly be considered drinkable, and so Pliny describes how it was thinned with hot water and afterwards passed through a strainer—a fashion of procedure which would scarcely meet with approval nowadays. After all, we are able in a measure to explain this solidity, for it was the custom of the Romans to mix honey with their old wines to soften their roughness—they would seem, according to ancient authors, to have scorned, as mere striplings, those crûs which had only reached the infantine age of twenty or thirty years, and which still preserved their liquid condition.

But it was not merely honey that the Romans and Greeks mixed with their wines. To render these grateful and palatable to the epicures of the period, aloes, tincture of tar, bitter almonds, dried figs, thyme, and myrtle leaves, were added, and—what may appear incredible—with certain crûs, such as those of Rhodes, Halicarnassus, Chio, and Lesbos, a proportion of sea-water was thought to be a decided improvement. Is it surprising, considering this ancient mode of treating wine, that gastric maladies were common with the Greeks and Romans, or that Julius Cæsar was invariably taken ill on rising from table?

We will, however, with these few introductory remarks, leave the ancients and their astounding vinous mixtures, and describe the system of vinification employed in the production of the Bordeaux wines, which are daily becoming more known to, and finding greater favour with, the English consumer.

The château which gives its name to the crû has attached to it an extensive range of dependencies, consisting of cuvier or press-house, chai or above-ground cellar, cooperage, and other buildings. It may be mentioned that there are two styles of cuvier, the old and the modern, the one storey and the two storey; but as the latter is a recent innovation, and as yet not generally adopted, and as in both instances the system of vinification, with the exception of some unimportant details, is the same, our description will be of the older style. The small proprietors who make their six or twelve tuns, that is to say, twenty-four or forty-eight casks, are not, as a matter of course, installed with the

same completeness as the producer whose vineyards yield one hundred and fifty tuns, or six hundred casks. But apart from the careful choosing and assorting the fruit, the mode of vinification is the same with the lowest as with the highest classed wines, and the method followed is identical in a *cuvier* constructed for the production of a score of casks of ordinaire, as in that disposed to meet the requirements necessitated by the yield of a hundred tuns of a choicer *crû*.

The *cuvier* is a building some hundred and fifty feet in length and some forty in width, with entrance and windows fronting the vines. Ranged on pediments of stone along the opposite wall, and also partly on the vineyard side, are from fifteen to twenty huge cuves, each containing an average of thirty casks. Placed over against the windows and at the same height from the ground, are three *pressoirs*, which in fashion and size are very similar to open platform railway trucks, and which adjoin each other. In the second of these is an *égrappoir*, or sieve, formed by a frame of transverse metal bars, six feet in length, four feet in width, and four in height. In the third stands a press. To prepare the cuves for the reception of the must, they are first filled with water, which causes the wood to swell, and when this has been withdrawn, the interior is carefully sponged with good brandy and a wicker grating fixed on the inside of the tap to prevent any solid matter passing when the liquor is racked off. Having thus given a notion of the *cuvier*, we will set the various hands to work.

From the vineyard comes a bullock-cart with its three laden *douils*, and this is backed to the window communicating with the first *pressoir*. Five men with bare feet, trowsers tucked to mid-thigh, and shirt-sleeves rolled to the shoulder, seize the *douils*, one after the other, and empty the fruit on to the floor of the *pressoir*. This is then shovelled, as required, by one of the men into the *égrappoir*, and the four others set to work, two on either side, to a vigorous rubbing of the bunches over the bars, thus separating the grape from the stalk—a violinist, accompanied perhaps by a fife, scraping a lively measure, to which the arms move in time. The bruised fruit falls through the sieve, the men standing ankle-deep in must, which runs off into a tub placed for its reception.

By the time the load of one bullock-cart has passed through the hands of the *égrap-*

peurs, another succeeds, and, as the must flows into the tub it is ladled into *comportes*, or deep buckets, which are then carried up an inclined travelling platform on the shoulders of two men, and emptied into the cuve. One or more cuves receive the must and broken skins of each variety of grape, the principal plants employed in the fabrication of the superior class of wines being the *cabernet-sauvignon*, the *malbec*, and the *merlot*. In some *cuviers* it is still the fashion to tread the fruit, in addition to the *égrappage*, but, generally speaking, the latter process is now considered as sufficiently meeting the requirements of breaking and bruising the berries. When the yield of each vineyard has been thus disposed of, the cuve or cuves containing the must are ticketed with the variety of grape, to which is added the date of charging: this last precaution is taken as a guide for calculating the time necessary to the complete fermentation, which is usually from twelve to fifteen days, according to the more or less ripe condition of the fruit, and the state of the temperature. When the cuve has received its charge it is hermetically sealed by a coating of lime, a metal tube carrying off into a closed reservoir of water the excess of carbonic gas. Thus the must-bespattered and purple-stained *cuvier* men keep pace with the gatherers of the vines, the final load passing through the *égrappoir* and into the cuve while the deputation of *vintagers*, with their bouquet, are complimenting the proprietor of the estate.

As the fruit is separated from the stalks, the latter are passed into the third *pressoir*, and submitted to the action of a powerful screw, the must produced being placed in a cuve destined especially for the purpose. The solid residue of the fruit, which is removed from the cuves after fermentation has taken place, and the liquor been run off, is also subjected to pressure, and the must resulting is added to that given by the stalks, an ordinary class of wine for consumption on the estate being thus obtained. Finally, the bruised skins are placed in a cuve or cuves, which are then filled up with water, a drink being produced, which is technically termed *piquette*, and which is drunk by the labourers engaged on the property.

We will now glance at the *chai*, built to contain from four to five hundred casks, and which is on the same level as, and in direct communication with, the *cuvier*. The wine of the previous year has been removed to other

quarters, and new casks of Stettin or Dalmatian oak, made at the cooperage on the estate, are ranged in a series of double ranks in readiness to receive the new vintage. When the manager has decided, from tasting, that the fermentation has been satisfactorily accomplished, the casks are drawn on hand-trucks from cuve to cuve, a given proportion of cabernet-sauvignon, malbec, and merlot being drawn off into each, the nicest judgment requiring to be shown in the blending of the liquor given by the different varieties of fruit, and it is this blending which constitutes the character and excellence of the *crû*. As the casks are filled they are taken back to their positions in the *chai*, a conical wooden stopper being placed lightly in the bung-holes, so as to permit the escape of gas caused by additional fermentation.

During the first month there is a very considerable amount of evaporation, necessitating the filling up with wine every three or four days. This addition is termed *ouillage*. The second month the stoppers are somewhat tightened down, and the *ouillage* is continued at intervals of a week. By March the lees have settled, and the wine is racked off into other casks, the conical stoppers being replaced by linen-clad bungs. Towards the close of May, when the vine begins to flower, there is a second racking off, and finally a third during the month of September, when no further *ouillage* is necessary. During the two following years a couple of changes are sufficient, in the spring and the autumn, and then the wine is in a condition to bottle.

On many of the estates the courtiers or brokers are permitted to taste the new vintage thirty days after it has been drawn off from the cuves, the character of the *crû* being sufficiently marked to permit of a judgment being formed as to how it is likely to develop, and then a price is fixed in accordance with the promise of future excellence and the requirements of commerce. Wine purchased under these conditions will very often nearly double its value in the course of a couple of years; the leading *crûs* of Lafite, Latour, and Margaux rising from the first price of fifty pounds the cask of three hundred bottles, to eighty or ninety pounds.

It should be mentioned that the superior wines of the Médoc are classed first, second, third, fourth, and fifth—those above quoted representing the first. Of course as we descend the scale the prices gradually

diminish from fifty pounds the cask, first hand, to fifteen pounds; but all may be calculated to double their value by the time they are in a condition for bottling. The leading character of these marvellous wines is the exquisite violet-like bouquet, the brilliant colour, and the lightness and body combined. Apart from the classed *crûs* are many excellent growths which come under the head of “bourgeois” and “paysans,” some of the first being almost equal to a fifth *crû*, and the second enjoying considerable reputation among the better *ordinares* or table wines. These may be had, first hand, at prices ranging from ten to six pounds the cask.

But with the exception of the higher-priced leading *crûs* which reach England in bottle, I take it that very few people at home ever drink a genuine Bordeaux, or, for that matter, any other red wine of the Gironde just as it leaves the cuves of the producer. Probably the consumer of cheap clarets may be somewhat startled by such a suggestion, but I think I shall be able to show that I have not idly come to this conclusion. There is scarcely a wine-bearing district of the department of the Gironde that I have not visited, and I have studied everything in connection with wine, from its production to its distribution for consumption. Now, with regard to the remarks that will follow, let me at once observe that I do not include the classed *crûs*, which are in most instances bottled on the several estates, and bear the brand and ticket of the proprietor. These, I think, with very few exceptions, reach the consumer genuine.

Of recent years the seasons have not been largely productive, and this, combined with the ravaging progress of the phylloxera, has caused a considerable falling off in the yield. A good average crop of fruit will give, for the whole of France, from fifty to fifty-five million of hectolitres—the hectolitre may be estimated at something like twenty-five gallons—but the returns, during the last three or four years, have fluctuated between thirty-five and forty millions of hectolitres. No doubt a very large amount of wine is held in store; yet, with a succession of unpropitious seasons, there must arise a difficulty in meeting the imperative requirements for home consumption, and naturally, this being the case, the question is raised as to how the quantity necessary for exportation is to be furnished. Again let me mention that I have in view the ordinary wines and not the exclusive higher

priced, the stock of which is certainly sufficient to meet the demand.

The wholesale houses have vast chaix, capable of holding many hundreds of casks, and they buy from the producer the pure wine as it leaves the cuves, the latter never tampering with his *crû*. We will enter one of these establishments and see the way in which the orders from home and foreign customers are executed. Let us suppose, for instance, that a dozen casks of a good bourgeois, of a given class, are required, the price being quoted at eight pounds. Well, the *maitre de chai*, or head cellarman, having ranged twelve casks in readiness, introduces into each a certain quantity of the most ordinary white wine. Then a butt of common, low-priced, rich coloured, strong, heady Spanish wine, usually from Arragon or Navarre, is broached, and a given proportion is mixed with the white for tinting and body, and to this is added some lighter cheap growths from the district where the genuine bourgeois is cultivated, with a modicum of alcohol to give staying power. Now follows the delicate question of producing the character peculiar to the wine originally ordered, and the practised palate of the *maitre de chai* here becomes necessary. A couple of casks of the pure bourgeois *crû* are tapped, and from these the filling of the dozen is proceeded with, the mouth of the cellarman being continually rinsed with the mixture, it being for him to determine when the quality and flavour has been successfully imitated. Thus a wine, or rather concoction, is produced, which has probably cost the agent only half the sum quoted in the order, and to this already extravagant profit has to be added the commission, which he will not fail to charge.

Frequently have I witnessed what is technically termed "*faire la cuisine*," in full operation, and for the benefit of the reader I will mention that in the very last establishment into which I set foot an order was being prepared, very much after the same fashion, to meet a demand from England. Of course it is to be presumed that our wine merchants are ignorant of such fraudulent manipulation, but then they can hardly expect to be treated more favourably than the customers of the North of France, Belgium, and other countries. The red wines of the Gironde are being made to produce three or four times the amount of their genuine quantity, and this system of falsification is growing to be a special art; a good cellarman who under-

stands their "treatment" being certain of lucrative and constant employment.

Now I have visited properties where really admirable ordinary wines of the bourgeois and paysan class are produced, wines that are full of body and flavour, and bright in colour. These may be purchased first-hand from the producer, at from eight pounds to six pounds the cask, of course buying in bulk, and I have little doubt that after paying transport and duty they could be profitably and largely disposed of in England, at something like one-and-sixpence or one shilling the bottle. There would be no lack of consumers for such good sound wines, which might be drank with impunity, and which leave no unpleasant after effects, such as cannot fail to result from the consumption of the fraudulent concoction I have described.

How often have I marvelled at the excellence of the *ordinaire* served at a proprietor's table, observing to my host that such wine never, by any chance, reached England, and yet, admirable as I found it, the price, on the estate, averaged from eightpence to tenpence the bottle. Scores of producers have expressed to me their astonishment at English houses not sending representatives to treat first-hand with the proprietors themselves, instead of trusting to their Bordeaux or Libourne agents, who often serve them badly and realise exorbitant profits. Naturally, the producer is no friend to the system of falsification practised, as it ruins the reputation of the wine with both home and foreign consumers. So, from my experience, I am convinced that British wine merchants, purchasing direct from the proprietor, would find it immensely to their advantage, and that in a very brief period their customers would be counted by millions instead of thousands.

There seems a probability of a considerable reduction being made in the duty on wines in the wood, and an English firm, under these circumstances, sending an agent to the Gironde to make purchases on the different estates of genuine *crûs*, from the producer's cuves, would no doubt largely benefit itself and its customers. A knowledge of the various properties, and the amount and quality produced on each, could be quickly obtained; falsification and exorbitant commissions would be avoided; and the home consumer would find, within the limits of his purse, a sound wholesome wine, hitherto placed beyond his reach.

VISITED ON THE CHILDREN.

BY THEO GIFT.

CHAPTER VII. AN ILL-ASSORTED COUPLE.

"It is no use talking to you, I know; yet I do wish you would take my advice in one respect at least," Mrs. Hamilton said to her brother that evening. "Marry; settle down and marry." And Gareth repeated the counsel to himself with a half-ironical smile half an hour afterwards, when, having resisted all persuasions to stay and sleep, having said good-night to his hosts and kissed the children in their cots, he found himself in the train again en route for London, and calculating that he should be in time for some supper at the Criterion even yet.

"Settle down and marry!" Aye, that's Helen's advice always. I wonder if she has any idea that I never feel less inclined to take it than after an evening at her house. And she's a good woman, too; manages it capitally; is fond of her children; breaks none of the commandments; a perfect Lucrece and Cornelia rolled into one; and yet— Good heavens! to think of that sort of thing being the sum and completion of a man's life. To be called 'Mr. Vane,' and told, when I come in hungry or tired, to ring the bell, and ask if the servants have thought of keeping any dinner for me! Hamilton, poor devil, doesn't look as if he enjoyed it very much; and, on the whole, I think it's his advice I ought to go by, not his wife's. He takes it more quietly than I should, however. I'd kick up the deuce and all of a row with a woman who treated me as Helen does him; either that or leave her altogether; for I couldn't live with a wife whom I wanted to thrash every time I looked at her. No; better go to the deuce one's own way, and by oneself, if marriage is to be an alternative between a wife like my good sister yonder, or a beautiful tiger-cat like Belle Beverley. Yet there are a few women of another sort, I suppose. Tom Sinclair's young wife, now. She's a perfect rosebud of sweetness—not to me, hates me, of course, because I lead Tom astray!—but to him; and that little girl with the Leslie face and innocent blue eyes— Would she develope into the stony British matron? Poor Hamilton! I'm very fond of Helen, but I do pity him; and yet I daresay he thought it quite a catch once."

If he had not, other people had, and had held up their hands in wonder and envy

when thirteen years before, John Hamilton, a young Scotch surgeon, without a farthing of his own and with no prospects, married Helen Vane, a young woman with an independent fortune of something like fifteen hundred a year, sound health, a fine complexion, and stainless reputation. It was like his luck, people said. He had always been a lucky man, seeing that he had already managed to make a little name for himself in the fashionable town of Brighton, where he had taken up his quarters, and to write a paper on throats (feminine throats especially) in the *Lancet*, which had even attracted some attention in the medical world outside. His appearance, too, was in his favour. Tall and graceful, with dark, melancholy eyes, a good voice, a white hand, and manners at once soothing and refined, he was sure to win with the women-folk at any rate. They said he was such a dear, and looked like a duke; and, indeed, few dukes could have dressed in better taste, ridden a better horse, or been better appointed in every way than the young doctor, who made no secret of the fact that his private means were "nil," and his career all before him.

How did he manage to do it? was the question which other men asked without getting an answer. The only evident thing was that he did do it, and that his so doing was in itself an assistant to his success. We all know Leigh Hunt's saying about the huckster with one egg, and certainly the less a man looks as if he needed help, the more ready the world in general is to help him—the world's bigwigs in particular. When Dr. Forceps-Brown, the well-known Brighton physician, spoke to his brother, ditto ditto in Surbiton, of young Hamilton as a decidedly rising man, popular with women, and likely to do credit as a partner, even to a practitioner of the Forceps-Brown calibre, he did the clever young surgeon a good turn, which would never have occurred to him if the latter had gone about with a shabby coat, or ill-brushed hair, or combined prescriptions with the sale of drugs in a dingy little surgery, like so many of his co-practitioners; and when the elder Forceps-Brown, for forty years past the most fashionable ladies' physician in Surbiton, intimated to young Hamilton that he would be willing to take him in the capacity suggested, and in the course of a few more years to dispose of the practice to him altogether, he showed a confidence in his

brother's advice which the result fully justified.

It was one of those chances in life which nine men out of ten miss, and which comes to the tenth only once in the whole course of his career. Young Hamilton caught at his luck gratefully, and, with it, apparently at something even greater; for, almost simultaneously with the news of his promotion, came that of his engagement to Miss Vane, the heiress, then staying at Brighton for the bathing season. He married her three months later, and the account of their wedding, of the bride's dress, and the bride's beauty, of the bridesmaids' lockets, and the bridal presents, filled half a column in the Morning Post. Was the world wrong in envying John Hamilton, and pronouncing him a most fortunate young man?

He took his honours very quietly. Raised suddenly from comparative poverty to affluence, with his future fully secured to him at an age when most men are toiling for the mere present, and a young and handsome wife, so devoted to him that, even during their brief engagement, her passionate admiration of her betrothed had been the occasion for some jesting among their mutual acquaintances, he bore about with him a subdued gravity and seriousness of manner which had no sign of pride or inflation in it. The gentle sadness in his dark eyes, which had been found so winning by the sentimental among his fair patients, seemed rather to deepen than decrease with his good-fortune; and, instead of being the silky-speeched ladies' man his partner had expected, old Forceps-Brown wrote to his brother that the Surbiton dames and damsels spoke of Mr. Hamilton as being exceedingly clever, but rather too serious and sparing of words for so young and pleasant-looking a man. No one could certainly have shown less elation, or have worn his good fortune more unobtrusively.

Of course there were not wanting people to give their own explanation of this unwonted sobriety and moderation in a young man, who might have been expected to be rather conceited and "uppish" in the large slice of luck that had fallen to him; and, naturally, the most generally assigned reason was that his attachment to Miss Vane had been rather for the "*beaux yeux de sa cassette*" than for the person of the young lady herself, and that if he could have had the former without the latter he would have been just as well pleased. Some people even asserted that he would have been

sufficiently unmercenary to dispense with both, but that the heiress had positively thrown herself at his head, and asked him to marry her; while others declared that it was pecuniary embarrassment which constrained him to the union in question, and that he had been actually engaged to someone else—a humble little Scotch girl, whom want of means alone prevented him from marrying, and who died of grief on reading the account of his wedding with the wealthy Miss Vane—a misfortune for which he had never forgiven himself. But as nobody had ever heard of the Scotch sweetheart before Dr. Hamilton's engagement to Miss Vane, and as, till then, he had been a rather general admirer of the fair sex, and had even been bestowed on two or three already in imagination, it may be believed that the world, always ill-natured, had invented the whole story, as well as that of the monetary embarrassment, of which the Brighton tradesmen, at any rate, were not cognisant.

There is always a grain of truth, however, in every bushel of lies; and perhaps the fact that Helen Vane was very much in love with her fiancé, and, being an heiress and a spoilt child, disdained to make any secret of the fact, either during her betrothal or bridehood, afforded sufficient substratum of verity for all the fictional castles afterwards erected on it. Young ladies with fifteen hundred pounds a year, without the salutary check of cold-blooded parents or elder relatives (for Miss Vane was an orphan with no nearer relation than her half-brother Gareth, then a boy at school), and accustomed from childhood to be bowed down to and made much of on every side, are apt to be less timid in expressing their feelings and opinions than girls in general. Perhaps, too, being of a frank, liberal nature, the fact that John Hamilton was almost the only unmarried man she had ever met who did not begin to make love to her at once, and who, even after her acceptance of him, managed to maintain a certain dignity and reticence in his wooing, helped to raise him in her estimation, and make her more ready to yield him, of her own free will, what he was too much a man to slavishly sue for.

No bad disposition for entering on married life! What was it, then, which had changed the fair prospect so sadly, and frozen the proud, enthusiastic young bride into the callous, sharp-tongued, indifferent wife, whose coldness to her husband made

even Gareth Vane shrug his shoulders in pity for one and blame for the other?

No falling off on the doctor's side at any rate. Less than two years after their marriage, an old Brighton friend visiting them wrote to her family there: "You would hardly know Mrs. Hamilton, marriage has so changed her. She looks ten years older than when she was at Brighton, has quite lost her high spirits and that fine colour people used to admire in her; and in place of running after her husband, drinking in his words as if no one else were worth listening to, and worshipping him in the ridiculous way she used to do when she was first married, she hardly ever looks at him, goes her own way entirely, and always seems to avoid speaking to him unless she is obliged. People say that they even sit in different rooms of an evening, and though they have one baby, a fine child and the image of the doctor, the mother evidently can't bear to see it in its father's arms, and makes herself so jealous and disagreeable if he notices or interferes with it in the most trivial way, that the poor man is almost afraid to look at his own child. As for him, however, he is just the same as he always was; just as gracious, pleasant, and kindly, and a model husband—never saying a sharp word to his wife, giving into her in everything, and really paying her more deference and attention than he did in his courting days."

And it was true. Dr. Hamilton did so both in public and in private. As Gareth saw him on the evening described so he was, whether seen or not, on all the other evenings in the year; and if he had been a somewhat lukewarm lover, or had had any self-interest in his wooing, he made up for it as a husband, and a man much richer now through his profession than he was through his wife, by such unwearied gentleness, kindness, and patient forbearance as few women meet with in their married lives. Mrs. Hamilton's smallest wishes were consulted, her slightest word was law in the home where she had now reigned for thirteen years. Her husband's consideration for her even extended to the children; for, though a man of warm fatherly and domestic instincts, he forced himself to restrain both in deference to the strange unnatural jealousy of his wife, and to deny himself the pleasure of sharing his boys' amusements and his girls' caresses rather than arouse the pain and anger which his not doing so would have excited.

The little Hamiltons were kept so much from their father, and had been so early checked in any over demonstrativeness of affection to him, that they grew up shy and formal with him as with a visitor, especially in their mother's presence; yet the cordial sweetness of his eyes and voice, and his unvarying kindness to them all, could not but have their effect on the young hearts, sensitive to affection as children's always are; and when Mrs. Hamilton, who was in her way a most conscientious mother, taught little Dolly that "Honour your father and your mother" meant love as well as obedience to her parents, the child looked up smilingly and said:

"Then I does it; for I loves you and I loves papa, too. Willie says he loves papa betterer because he never scolds anybody; and when Willie's a man he's going to be a doctor too, and always go out with papa everywhere, and help him cure people, he says. Is it naughty of him, mamma, to say it that you look so? Are you angry?"

"I shall be angry if you chatter instead of saying your lesson," said Mrs. Hamilton coldly. "Your papa would scold both you and Willie well if he had any of the trouble with you that I take every day and all day. But you are ungrateful children." And there was such an understrain of bitterness in her tone that poor Dolly felt vaguely that she had been naughty as well as Willie; and that when mamma said children were to love their fathers she did not mean that they should love them very much—not as much as mammas, for instance. Yet when an hour later Mrs. Hamilton met Willie just as he had achieved the unhallowed, because forbidden, act of sliding down the handrail of the first-floor staircase, she did not scold him as the culprit fully expected; but just put her hand on his neck, saying:

"Child, that is very dangerous. Don't do it again;" and then gave him one of those sudden, close kisses which always made the youngsters stare at her with wide, wondering eyes, and question in their little souls why mamma's eyes so often looked as if they wanted to cry when she kissed them.

God pity a home so fashioned, and in such a hard, loveless, untender fashion! God pity every home where husband and wife are not one but two, and where the children form elements of discord and division instead of golden links binding two loving hearts in even closer union!

Even men pitied Dr. Hamilton; men and women too; for at forty-three the doctor's talents and amiability made him as popular as he had been at thirty; and few even of those who liked his wife pitied her. How could she need it when she had really everything that woman could desire?

She did not seem to desire compassion. Her hard pale face had never looked harder than when she came downstairs, candle in hand, and stepping softly, about a couple of hours after Gareth's departure. The whole house was quiet then; for the children had been in their cots long before, the servants always went to bed at ten, and even Dr. Hamilton, tired with his day's work, had retired to rest; but there was no sleepiness in Mrs. Hamilton's eyes as she glided across the hall, and opening the door of the doctor's study very softly, stole up to the picture on which her brother had been commenting earlier on that evening. Its position was changed now. The easel had been pulled more into the middle of the room, and her husband's chair stood in front of it, as if he had been sitting there to admire his purchase, while the canvas was carefully covered with a fine cloth as though to guard it from servants' eyes and fingers. Mrs. Hamilton's dark eager eyes, glittering with unnatural brightness in the ashen pallor of her face, marked each little change at once; and there was a quiver in both lips and fingers as she removed the cover and bent down, examining and re-examining the pictured face beneath with a hungry scrutiny, which seemed as if it would fain have torn from it the likeness of some suspected original.

"He would never have looked so pale and disturbed if it were a mere fancy portrait," she muttered to herself. "Is it like anyone? The hair is the same colour as that—but everyone has golden hair now. It proves nothing." She stood up again at last, and replaced the cover with a weary unsatisfied sigh. Her husband's

portrait hung over the mantel-piece, and she went up to it, and stood gazing up at the face for some moments with a strange yearning look, even reaching out her hand to wipe, almost tenderly, a little dust which was dimming a portion of the painting. Even in the act, however, a change came over her face. The normal pallor of its colouring faded to an almost livid tint, her features became convulsed; and it was only by clutching hold of the mantel-shelf, and clenching her teeth over her lower lip, that she was able to avoid falling down or shrieking aloud in the agony which seemed to overcome her. As it was, one piteous moan did break from her lips; but she stifled it at once by burying her face on her arms, and then stood still for some moments struggling mutely, save for the deep gasping breaths which shook her whole frame, with the unseen enemy which had seized her.

Fortunately, the conflict did not last long. Ten minutes later the study was again empty, and Mrs. Hamilton might have been seen entering her own room, candle in hand, and stepping softly as she had left it, but the look on her face was different even in the short time that had elapsed. It was worn and haggard. She looked like a woman of fifty rather than of thirty-seven; and her pale lips were still shaking as she set down the candle and wiped the damp from her brow where it was standing in huge beads.

"God help me!" whispered the unhappy woman to herself. "God have mercy on me when the worst comes! How shall I be able to keep it to myself, then! And my children—my poor children!"

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